UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF TEXAS
HOUSTON DIVISION

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	§	
Plaintiff	§	
v.	§	CIVIL ACTION NO.
	§	
APPROXIMATELY TWENTY-FIVE	§	
PIT BULL-TYPE DOGS SEIZED FROM	§	
CROSBY, TEXAS	§	
Defendants	§	

COMPLAINT FOR FORFEITURE IN REM

The United States of America ("United States") files this action for forfeiture and alleges upon information and belief:

Nature of the Action

1. This is an action to forfeit pit bull-type dogs to the United States of America pursuant to 7 U.S.C. § 2156(f).

Defendants in Rem

2. The Defendants in Rem (collectively, the "Defendant Dogs") are approximately twenty-five pit bull-type dogs seized on or about April 28, 2017, in Crosby, Texas pursuant to a federal seizure warrant and are generally described as:

a. Four tan female pit bull-type dogs;

b. Two brown female pit bull-type dogs;

c. One tan/white female pit bull-type dogs;

d. One brown/white female pit bull-type dogs;

e. Two black female pit bull-type dogs;

f. One cream female pit bull-type dogs;

g. Five brown male pit bull-type dogs;

h. Three black male pit bull-type dogs;

i. One brindle male pit bull-type dogs;

j. One tan male pit bull-type dogs; and

k. Four red male pit bull-type dogs

3. The Defendant Dogs are in the custody of the United States Marshals Service and are being cared for by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA).

Jurisdiction and Venue

4. This Court has subject-matter jurisdiction pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1345 and 1355.

5. Venue is proper in this Court pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1355(b)(1), 1391(b), and 1395.

Statutory Basis for Forfeiture

6. The Defendant Dogs are subject to forfeiture under 7 U.S.C. § 2156(f), which provides for the forfeiture of any animal involved in a violation of 7 U.S.C. § 2156. Under 7 U.S.C. § 2156, it is illegal "to knowingly sell, buy, possess, train, transport, deliver, or receive any animal for purposes of having the animal participate in an animal fighting venture."

7. The costs incurred in caring for animals seized and forfeited under 7 U.S.C. § 2156(f) "shall be recoverable from the owner of the animals (1) if he appears in such forfeiture proceeding. . . ." 7 U.S.C. § 2156(f).

Background

8. Dog fighting is a violent contest in which two dogs that are bred and conditioned for fighting are released by their owners or handlers in a controlled environment to attack each other and fight for purposes of entertainment or gambling. Fights usually end when one dog

withdraws, when a handler "picks up" his dog and forfeits the match, or when one or both dogs die.

9. Dog fighters commonly fight dogs with a goal of obtaining "Champion" or "Grand Champion" status for their dogs, which is typically achieved by winning three or five fights, respectively. They typically maintain contact with other dog fighters around the country, and can generate substantial income from gambling on dog fights and from the sale and breeding of fighting animals.

10. It is common for persons involved in animal fighting ventures to possess multiple dogs at a time because dogs are typically matched for fights by weight class and sex. Having multiple dogs that have not been spayed or neutered also allows individuals to selectively breed, sell, and fight dogs that display certain traits, or to otherwise advance a particular bloodline of fighting dogs.

11. Persons engaged in dog fighting ventures exclusively use pit bull-type dogs, which typically have a short coat, compact muscular build, and an aggressive temperament that some exhibit toward other dogs.

12. Persons who fight dogs or who possess or train dogs for participation in animal fighting ventures often restrain or isolate the dogs. They typically place the dogs on heavy chains or in pens or crates, and they typically put thick collars on the dogs to help prevent them from getting loose and attacking other dogs.

13. Persons who possess and train dogs for participation in animal fighting ventures often use treadmills and/or water tanks to condition dogs for fighting.

14. Owners, breeders, and trainers of dogs that are intended for participation in animal fighting ventures often possess pedigrees, which may indicate the breeding history of the dog going

back multiple generations and how many fights a dog in the bloodline has won. If a dog has won at least three or five fights, the pedigree may indicate that the dog is a champion or grand champion, respectively. This information helps an owner and/or breeder of the featured dog establish the dog's fighting lineage.

Facts

15. On or about April 27, 2017, law enforcement agents and officers were executing an arrest warrant, based upon drug and firearm charges, for Trevian Edwards at his residence in Crosby, Texas when they observed numerous pit bull-type dogs along with items that are consistent with the possession and/or training of dogs for dog fighting.

16. On or about April 28, 2017, law enforcement seized the Defendant Dogs pursuant to a federal seizure warrant. Consistent with dogs possessed and/or trained for participation in animal fighting ventures, all of the Defendant Dogs were housed individually outside, many of the Defendant Dogs were chained to the ground (with some chained to visible car axles), and the rest were housed in dirty wire pens. Additionally, many of the Defendant Dogs were wearing thick collars commonly used on dogs possessed and/or trained for participation in animal fighting ventures because they are stronger and less likely to allow a dog to break off a chain.

17. None of the Defendant Dogs were spayed or neutered, which is common among dogs intended for participation in animal fighting ventures.

18. During the execution of a search warrant, law enforcement observed two metal treadmill-like devices and a large plastic water tank. Each of these items contained a bar or beam above them with a metal clip that matched the style of a clip typically used to fasten a dog's collar, and each of the items are commonly used to physically condition dogs in preparation for a fight.

19. Law enforcement also found the following items, among other things, inside Trevian Edwards' residence:

a. A book entitled "The Complete Guide to Conditioning a Dog," which describes the "rules of the pit," the "pros and cons of the treadmill," the "keep" or the conditioning process a dog undergoes in the weeks leading up to a fight, and instructions on how to treat a dog after a fight;

b. Notes on administering drugs to male and female dogs and notes on weight pulling by dogs;

c. Pedigrees of pit bull-type dogs, including pedigrees listing Trevian Edwards as the owner and containing the letters "CH" and/or "GR CH" that typically indicate that certain dogs were champions or grand champions;

d. Publications produced by people associated with the dog fighting and cockfighting community.

e. Receipts for weighted collars, which are typically used by dog fighters to enhance the stamina and muscle strength of fighting dogs; and

f. A commercially-produced disc of eight dog fights.

20. Some items obtained from Trevian Edwards' residence indicate, among other things, that some pit bull-type dogs owned by Trevian Edwards were bred by a person located outside of Texas, that certificates of registration for some pit bull-type dogs owned by Trevian Edwards came from a company located outside of Texas, and that some weighted collars were purchased outside of Texas.

21. In 2009, Trevian Edwards was convicted of a misdemeanor dog fighting offense in state court in Harris County, Texas.

22. There is reason to believe that the Defendant Dogs, and any offspring produced prior to the conclusion of this case, are subject to forfeiture under 7 U.S.C. § 2156(f).

Request for Relief

The United States of America respectfully requests a judgment forfeiting the Defendant Dogs, and any offspring produced prior to the conclusion of this case, to the United States of America and ordering such costs and other relief to which the United States of America may be entitled, including the costs associated with the care of the Defendant Dogs pursuant to 7 U.S.C. § 2156(f) if the owner(s) appear in this action.

Respectfully submitted,

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Verification

I, Michael Clutter, a Special Agent with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General-Investigations, hereby affirm and verify that the factual information set forth in the foregoing Complaint For Forfeiture In Rem is based upon either personal knowledge or from information or records obtained during investigation and from other law enforcement personnel, and are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Michael Clutter
Special Agent
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of Inspector General

Sworn and subscribed before me, the undersigned authority, on May 26th, 2017.

Notary Public in and for the State of Texas

My commission expires:

LIEU T LE
NOTARY PUBLIC
STATE OF TEXAS
ID 13093010-8
EXP. 12-13-2020